Policy initiatives taken for increasing the hydro capacity

* Policy on hydro power development 1998—lays emphasis on exploitation of vast hydro-electric potential, on strengthening the role of Public Sector Undertakings/ State Electricity Utilities, increasing private investments and basin-wise development of hydro potential.

* Electricity Act, 2003—permits direct commercial relationship between consumers/ traders, right to open access through State/Central transmission utilities, enlarges the scope of captive power plants and has emphasized the development of hydro power.

* National Electricity Policy—lays maximum emphasis on full development of feasible hydro potential, debt financing of longer tenure.

* Mega Power Projects Policy—the import of capital equipments free of custom duty, deemed export benefit for domestic suppliers, income tax holiday regime for a period of ten years. The threshold limit to obtain the mega power status is 1000 MW for thermal and 500 MW for hydro projects. Further the minimum qualifying threshold capacity for hydro-electric projects has been reduced to 350 MW for the projects located in special category States of Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim and North-Eastern States.

Generation of nuclear power

421. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state the long term cost of generating nuclear power, including capital and recurring costs in our country and in what way it compares with that the coal based power projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): The cost of generation of nuclear power is characterized by lower energy charge (fuel) and higher capacity charge (financing costs). As a consequence, the cost of generation over the years remains almost stable and increase is only marginal on account of lower fraction of energy charge. Currently tariff for one nuclear power station is 95 paise/kWh and that of three stations is less than Rs. 2/kWh with an average for all power stations being Rs. 2.30/kWh.

The generation cost of coal-based stations varies according to distance from coal mines. This is on account of the transportation cost of coal. The tariffs of nuclear power stations are competitive with those of coal-based stations located away from coal mines.

Safety measures in nuclear reactors

422. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that nuclear reactors in our country have less safety measures;

(b) if so, the safety measures being followed in all reactors to control leakage of radiation; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) to (c) All Indian Nuclear Reactors follow stringent international safety standards and have adequate shielding and containment to prevent leakage or discharge of radioactivity beyond the limits specified by the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB).